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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*Recent Communist Logistical and Manpower  
Developments in Indochina*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
13 March 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

RECENT COMMUNIST LOGISTICAL  
AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

SUMMARY

1. As the dry season moves into its closing months, there continue to be many signs that North Vietnamese personnel and materiel are moving in many parts of Indochina. Our current perspective of the situation, however, is somewhat uneven.

2. Logistical traffic in southern Laos and South Vietnam, particularly in Military Region (MR) 1, remains heavy. Military supplies continue to be on the move in North Vietnam, but the overall levels of traffic there appear lighter than before the cease-fire. In the ordinary course of events, we would expect logistical activity to be tapering off very sharply there at this stage of the dry season. Thus, whether the current slackening reflects accommodation by North Vietnam to the cease-fire conditions is simply too early to say.

3. Hanoi continued to introduce both combat and specially skilled personnel into the infiltration pipeline last week. Post-cease-fire infiltration starts now total at least 8,000 men. Another anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) regiment has deployed into Quang Tri Province, probably after the cease-fire date. Other AAA units are currently deploying from the northern part of the Laotian Panhandle to central South Vietnam, and major Communist command elements were again noted relocating from Cambodia to South Vietnam's MR 3. In Laos, some major combat units appear to be standing down, but as yet none have been detected leaving the country.

Note: Comments and queries are welcomed. They may be directed to  
[redacted] of the Office of Economic Research, [redacted]  
[redacted]

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## DISCUSSION

## Recent Communist Logistical Developments in Indochina

*Logistical Activity in South Vietnam*

4. During the past week the North Vietnamese continued (and made preparations to sustain) heavy resupply activity within South Vietnam. On 8 March an NVA element in northeastern Quang Tri Province reported on large amounts of vehicles and equipment probably moving south within the Province. According to an intercepted message that day, the element has "handled" a total of 2,865 vehicles. Although the period was not provided, the report almost certainly covered a period of at least one month - possibly the month of February. The vehicles enumerated in the message included "697 transport vehicles, 682 empty vehicles, 680 troop transports, and 806 jeeps." Thus the unit carried both supplies and personnel during the period. The nearly 700 transportation vehicles could have delivered some 2,800 tons of supplies - or 100 tons per day in February -- to storage areas and the front lines in Quang Tri Province. By comparison, we estimate that current Communist resupply requirements in Quang Tri Province approximate 50 to 60 tons daily of foodstuffs and 10 to 15 tons daily of ordnance (at current expenditure rates) and other military supplies which must be brought from North Vietnam. If this was a monthly summary, it implies that a quantity of supplies in excess of requirements was moved. The almost 700 empty vehicles may have been headed back north to pick up more cargo. No indication of the type of supplies moved was provided. However, on the same day, the unit revealed that 85 vehicles with the artillery of two AAA regiments had passed through its area, indicating that some part of the supplies being moved was ordnance.

5. More recent evidence of heavy vehicle activity in South Vietnam came on 8 March when elements of Binh Tram 12 reported that more than 350 vehicles were active in Quang Tri Province. The vehicles were simply reported as having "entered" or "departed" from various unlocated areas under Binh Tram 12's auspices. Evidence of the large quantities of supplies stockpiled in Quang Tri was displayed on 3 March when Binh Tram 12 reported that more than 1,600 tons of supplies had been recently destroyed when an ammunition dump exploded.

6. The Communist logistic activity recently noted around Khe Sanh has not subsided. [ ] photography, for example, 47 NVA supply trucks were noted moving east and south of Khe Sanh. Other recent photography showing numerous trucks in vehicle parks and supplies stored openly in the vicinity indicates sustained logistical activity along Route 9.



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[REDACTED]

In addition, photography shows that the Communists are at work upgrading a second runway at Khe Sanh Airfield, and both it and the original runway are capable of handling light transport aircraft. As yet, there has been no confirmation that any aircraft have used the facilities. Southwest of Khe Sanh, several new AAA sites along Route 9 are nearing completion, and the installation of landlines for communications in these areas suggests an expectation of settling in on the part of the North Vietnamese.

7. Slightly farther south, in Thua Thien Province, aerial observers report that routes leading into the A Shau Valley received heavy use during the first week of March. Troops of the 324B NVA Division are scattered throughout the mountainous areas of western Thua Thien Province, where they protect transportation units bringing in war materiel from North Vietnam. One NVA engineer company reportedly is equipped to dig trenches and build caches in the mountainous border area where materiel is to be concealed for future military activity.

8. The North Vietnamese are also improving their logistic capabilities elsewhere in MR 1 and the adjacent Laotian border area. Recently, photography revealed a newly constructed segment of petroleum pipeline crossing the Laos/South Vietnam border in the Route 922 area just north of the A Shau Valley. The pipeline had been emplaced since last December. Although there is no evidence that it hooks up with the north/south pipeline in southern Laos, such a connection would seem likely and would significantly facilitate Communist resupply operations around A Shau, a major Communist base area. In the same general area, a major supply artery leading eastward from the A Shau Valley also has been recently upgraded.

9. Still farther south, Communist capabilities have been improved by the construction of a new 70-mile road extending from the Laotian border into Quang Ngai Province in southern MR 1. When completed, it will provide a motorable road from Route 966 in southern Laos to the coastal lowlands of Quang Ngai. The western half of the road, first detected in January, is now complete and showing signs of vehicle use. Photography [REDACTED] showed construction still under way on the eastern half of the road, and [REDACTED] much of it, too, is now sustaining truck and tank traffic. The Viet Cong reportedly are also constructing a large secret tunnel complex in northern Quang Ngai to use as a supply base and troop-quartermaster facility.

10. In southern South Vietnam, there were numerous sightings of trucks moving south through Tay Ninh Province during the last half of February. The reported construction in northern Tay Ninh Province of three new 37-mm AAA sites near Xa Mat, the point designated by the South Vietnamese government as a logistic entry point for the Communists,

provides evidence of an intent to resupply that area from Cambodian bases. Route 244 in eastern Tay Ninh reportedly is being used extensively by trucks hauling ammunition, food, medicine, and construction materials for the 7th NVA Division's storage bases in adjacent Binh Long Province. Also, in Binh Long Province, along Route 13 north of An Loc, aerial reconnaissance [ ] revealed eight ZSU-57 self-propelled antiaircraft guns. Recent photography has also revealed 37-mm and 57-mm AAA guns and two 130-mm field guns being towed south in Binh Long. In addition, GVN air spotter reports from mid-February to 7 March have identified some 90 NVA tanks in MR 3.

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11. The North Vietnamese may try to keep supplies moving into Tay Ninh in spite of the presence of an inspection team of the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) near the border. COSVN has reportedly directed that damaged weapons be collected near Xa Mat, to be checked by the ICCS and subsequently replaced by new items. This was done only as a "symbolic gesture" and as a "cover" for the infiltration of new war materiel from North to South Vietnam. The source added that only by "overtly" replacing worn-out weapons and at the same time "covertly" infiltrating new ones can the Communists have a large supply of arms, and concluded that North Vietnamese engineers are refurbishing roads and cutting new routes across the Cambodia/Tay Ninh border so trucks and tanks can move rapidly.

#### *Logistic Activity in Southern Laos and Cambodia*

12. Detected Communist logistical activity in Laos and Cambodia was somewhat slower last week than during previous weeks. However, significant resupply continued, and it is too soon to judge whether the lower level of detected activity accurately portrays the current functioning of the entire system. Occasional poor weather over Laos could have had some impact on logistic flows. Moreover, the decreased activity through the input corridors after a heavy February push parallels the pattern in past dry seasons. Most [ ] traffic continues to be through the Ban Karai Pass, where a daily average of 25 southbound movements -- well below the average of 70 for the preceding week -- were detected on Route 912 between 6 and 11 March. The pace of activity roughly doubled on Route 1033 west of the DMZ, with 17 southbound detections per day during the same period. At Mu Gia Pass, light vehicle activity continued

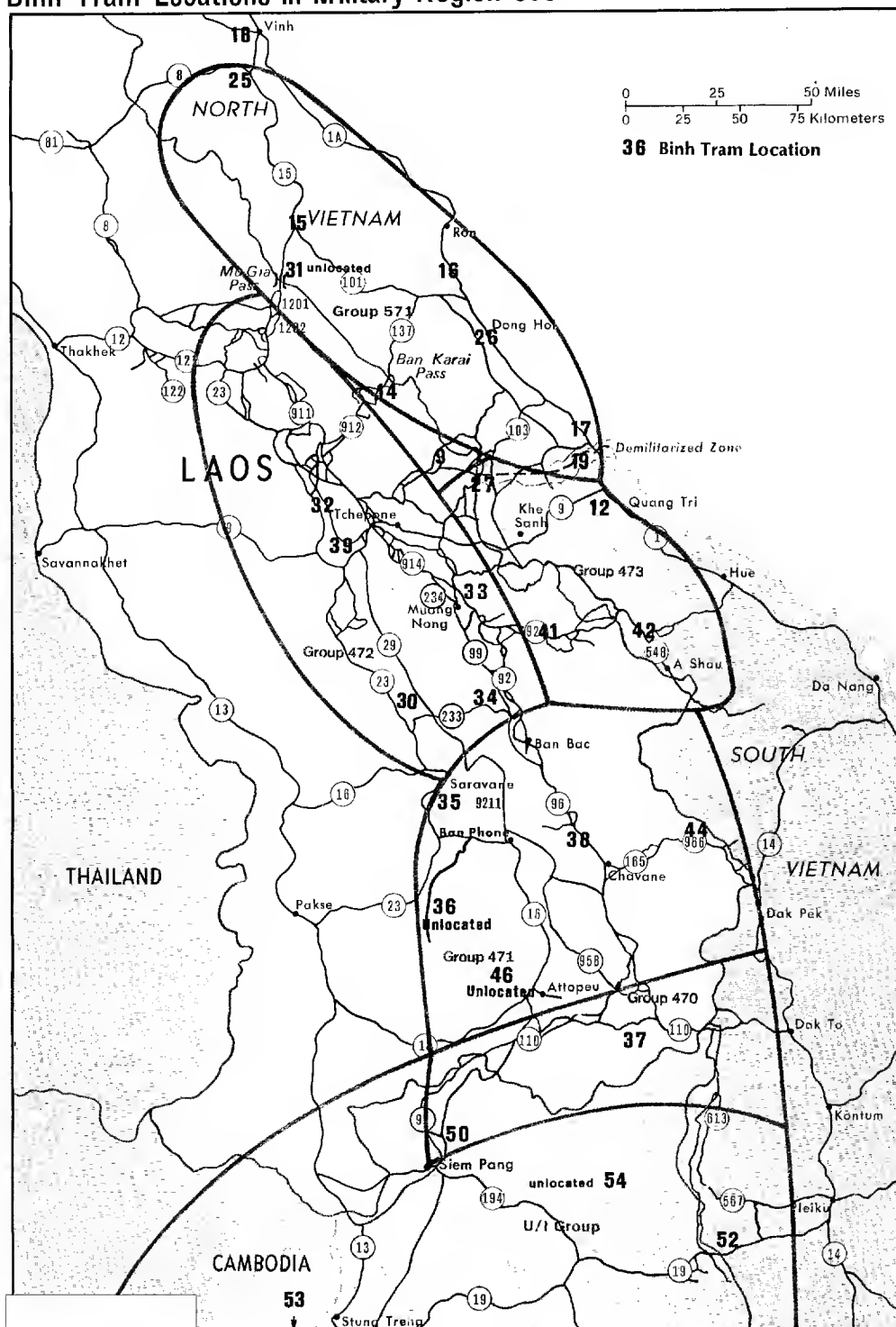
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13. The largest transportation effort in southern Laos detected recently in COMINT involved vehicle movements from the central to the southern Panhandle. On 1 March, COMINT revealed that 150 vehicles of two transportation battalions had been dispatched from Group 472 and

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# Binh Tram Locations in Military Region 559



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would arrive at Group 470 by 4 March. The cargo being transported included communications gear and "military equipment." [redacted]

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[redacted] a 50 to 60 truck NVA convoy moved south along Route 16 through Attapeu to Cambodia carrying both foodstuffs and munitions.

14. Numerous references to transportation activity dealt with the movement of rice and other foodstuffs to communications-liaison entities along the Laotian corridor, some of which reported inadequate food supplies to accommodate the large numbers of personnel which they are handling. Between 6 and 9 March, for example, the 574th Communications-Liaison Regiment, which probably operates in the Saravane/Attapeu area, reported receiving at least 30 tons of rice -- enough to provide 10 days' rice rations for 4,000 personnel. Other units have been reported moving petroleum and communications gear south through the Panhandle. Some tanks -- probably stragglers from groups previously detected moving south -- are also continuing to move through southern Laos; on 7 March, reference was made to the consignment of more than 100 tons of diesel fuel to Binh Tram 34, possibly for continuing resupply of tanks currently moving through the system.

15. Several new organizational developments have been observed during the past week. Last week it was reported that Binh Tram 33 may have been disbanded and its role assumed by other units in the central Panhandle. Now it appears that Binh Trams 28 and 47 near the DMZ and the Bolovens Plateau area, respectively, have relinquished their Binh Tram status. The evolution of Binh Tram 47 from a logistical function to a tactical unit -- the NVA 59th Regiment, operating in the Bolovens area -- has been under way since late 1972. The Binh Tram had apparently relinquished all logistic responsibilities by several weeks ago, when it was excluded from a list of Group 471 subordinates. Part of the void left by Binh Tram 47's demise may be filled by the newly reemerged Binh Tram 46, which had not been heard from following a temporary merger with Binh Tram 36 late last year. The current locations and roles of Binh Trams 36 and 46 are unclear, but it appears likely that one is responsible for moving supplies south from Laos toward Cambodia or the tri-border, while the other -- probably Binh Tram 46 -- is responsible for logistic support to Communist tactical forces in southern Laos. Binh Tram 28, which was believed to have been responsible for logistic activity around Khe Sanh, has also been redesignated: on 3 March, Group 473 was informed that "the former Binh Tram 28 is now the 28th Artillery Regiment." Given the probable composition of the 28th Regiment, however, it is more likely that the unit will function as an antiaircraft unit than as a field artillery unit. The impact of these organizational changes cannot yet be discerned; however, it is clear that with US bombing halted

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over southern Laos, North Vietnam's manpower requirements to carry out logistic operations are greatly reduced.

16. Heavy logistic activity and continuing troop transport in the Binh Tram 37 area -- near the tri-border area of Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam -- and in northeastern Cambodia was detected during the week. On 3 March, Group 470 revealed that Binh Tram 37 was preparing for "a new offensive," Binh Tram 50 was supporting troop movements, and "activities are normal" at Binh Tram 53. Vehicles transporting cargo within the area were also referenced. Several days later, 25 vehicles were reported as being sent to Group 471, probably after having left their southbound cargo with elements of Group 470. On 7 March, it was revealed that cargo had been received at a storage area associated with activity in the B-3 Front.

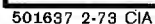
17. Apparently both waterways and roads are being used in the current effort in the border area. According to a 10 March intercept, troops being transported to COSVN are moving by boat, probably down the Se Kong River into northern Cambodia, while those going to the Central Highlands are traveling by truck, probably via eastern Route 110.

25X1 18. Inside Cambodia, aerial surveillance over several key enemy-used roads [ ] revealed considerable truck traffic on Route 19 east of Stung Treng, but few signs of activity of Route 13 to the south. The absence of movement of Route 13 is unusual, considering its past importance as a major supply route. A plausible explanation is that vehicles may now be using a recently built, heavily camouflaged road 15-20 miles to the east which leads toward the important Communist base areas adjacent to South Vietnam's MR 3.

#### *Logistical Developments in Southern North Vietnam*

19. In the rear base the North Vietnamese have recently improved their lines of communication by completing repairs on key bridges in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas. The Doumer Bridge at Hanoi was reportedly repaired in less than six weeks after the bombing halted over North Vietnam despite its having eight piers damaged and three spans destroyed. Its return to service restores direct rail and highway traffic between Hanoi and the major supply corridors from China and the Haiphong port. On the western edge of Haiphong, the recently restored Tam Bac Rail Bridge replaces a lower capacity combination fixed span/barge bridge and provides full rail capacity between the port and Hanoi and south to Thanh Hoa. A rail ferry is still used to cross the river at Thanh Hoa, but from there south the line is operational to Vinh.

20. The North Vietnamese are continuing to use the rail line into the Vinh area to move cargo. On 9 March an associate of Binh Tram 18



reported that ammunition and other cargo were being moved to the rail station at Cho Si, the jumping off point for supplies headed to northern Laos. The station was ordered to ensure that this shipment was offloaded and not sent farther south to Vinh, an indication that other cargo is, in fact, moving by rail into Vinh. At least 55, and possibly as many as 85, vehicles are to be engaged in supply movements between Cho Si and points farther east on Route 7.

21. Resupply activity through the North Vietnam Panhandle is to continue in the near future. A Binh Tram 18 associate revealed on 10 March that 1,100 tons of cargo were to be received by one element in the Binh Tram 25 area during March. The entity which was to handle the receipt of this cargo was specified, but, again, the types of cargo expected were not enumerated. An associate which is apparently not to be involved in this transaction is reportedly now engaged primarily in the receipt of "various types of weapons." This intercept is the largest single reference to supply movements through the general Vinh area since the cease-fire. While activity there has apparently been at a lower pace since late January, such a drop is not unexpected at this stage of the dry season. Still, sporadic references such as this do imply that weapons and ammunition continue to move south.

22. Although evidence of resupply activity south of Vinh was limited during the reporting period, a 5 March intercept confirmed the previously reported high level of activity there in late February. More than 2,800 tons of unidentified cargo were reported on the move to numerous locations in the Group 571 area during the period 26-28 February. Recipients of the cargo included Binh Trams 14, 16, 19, 25, and 26, all major subordinates of Group 571, while some quantities of cargo were simply consigned to various other areas designated by placename. Both vehicles and barges were used to move these supplies.

#### **Recent Communist Manpower Developments in Indochina**

##### ***Personnel Infiltration***

23. The detection of infiltration groups continued during the past week, as two new regular and 21 special-purpose groups appeared in COMINT. As a result of these detections, it is now apparent that at least 8,000 personnel in both regular and special-purpose groups started south after 28 January.

24. The most significant development during the past week was the initial detection of two regular infiltration groups in the Vinh area destined for northern South Vietnam. This marks the first time since the cease-fire

that regular combat groups have been specifically confirmed entering the pipeline in this area. While evidence of the insertion of regular infiltration groups since mid-February is sparse, it is too early to reach any positive conclusion based on this.

25. Thus far this dry season a total of 84,500 infiltrators are estimated to have entered the pipeline, only slightly fewer than the total for the comparable period during the 1971/72 dry season - 88,500. With the detection of the two regular groups in North Vietnam plus resulting gapfills, the total number of personnel destined for MR Tri-Thien-Hue is double that for last year, as shown in the following tabulation:

<i>Destination</i>	<i>1 Sep 72 - 12 Mar 73</i>	<i>1 Sep 71 - 12 Mar 72</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>84,500</b>	<b>88,500</b>
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	26,000	13,000
MR 5	9,000	16,500
B-3 Front	12,500	21,000
COSVN	26,000	30,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	11,000	8,000

#### *VC/NVA Redeployments in South Vietnam*

26. Recent evidence reveals that the 254th NVA AAA Regiment is now located in Quang Tri Province. In early January 1973 the unit was located northeast of Hanoi, and it probably arrived in-country after the cease-fire. If so, this would be the first known instance of a regimental-size force moving into South Vietnam after 28 January and would bring to five the number of air defense regiments known to have deployed from North Vietnam and northern Laos to Quang Tri Province since 1 January. Other AAA elements may also be on the move south: the 246th Regiment, which moved from the Hanoi area into Quang Binh Province during February is still in a deploying status and could move farther south, as may the 225th and 256th AAA Regiments, currently located near Hanoi.

27. Although the reason for North Vietnam's decision to deploy south an increasing number of its air defense units from around Hanoi is unclear, it is significant that these units are trained not only in air defense, artillery, and infantry tactics but also in military police activity, which they have used previously to control the population during periods of heavy flooding and bombing in the north. On the other hand, Hanoi may simply be attempting to augment air defense protection for its ground combat forces in the south in the event large-scale warfare is resumed.



# Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

## South Vietnam

### Regular Combat Forces

VC/NVA<sup>1</sup>    RVNAF<sup>2</sup>

160,000    279,000

VC/NVA    RVNAF

82,000    62,000

325th    VNMC  
324B    Airborne  
320B    1st  
312th    2nd  
308th    3rd  
304th    Regional  
711th    Forces  
2nd

VC/NVA    RVNAF

25,000    60,000

320th    23rd  
10th    22nd  
3rd    Regional  
Forces

VC/NVA    RVNAF

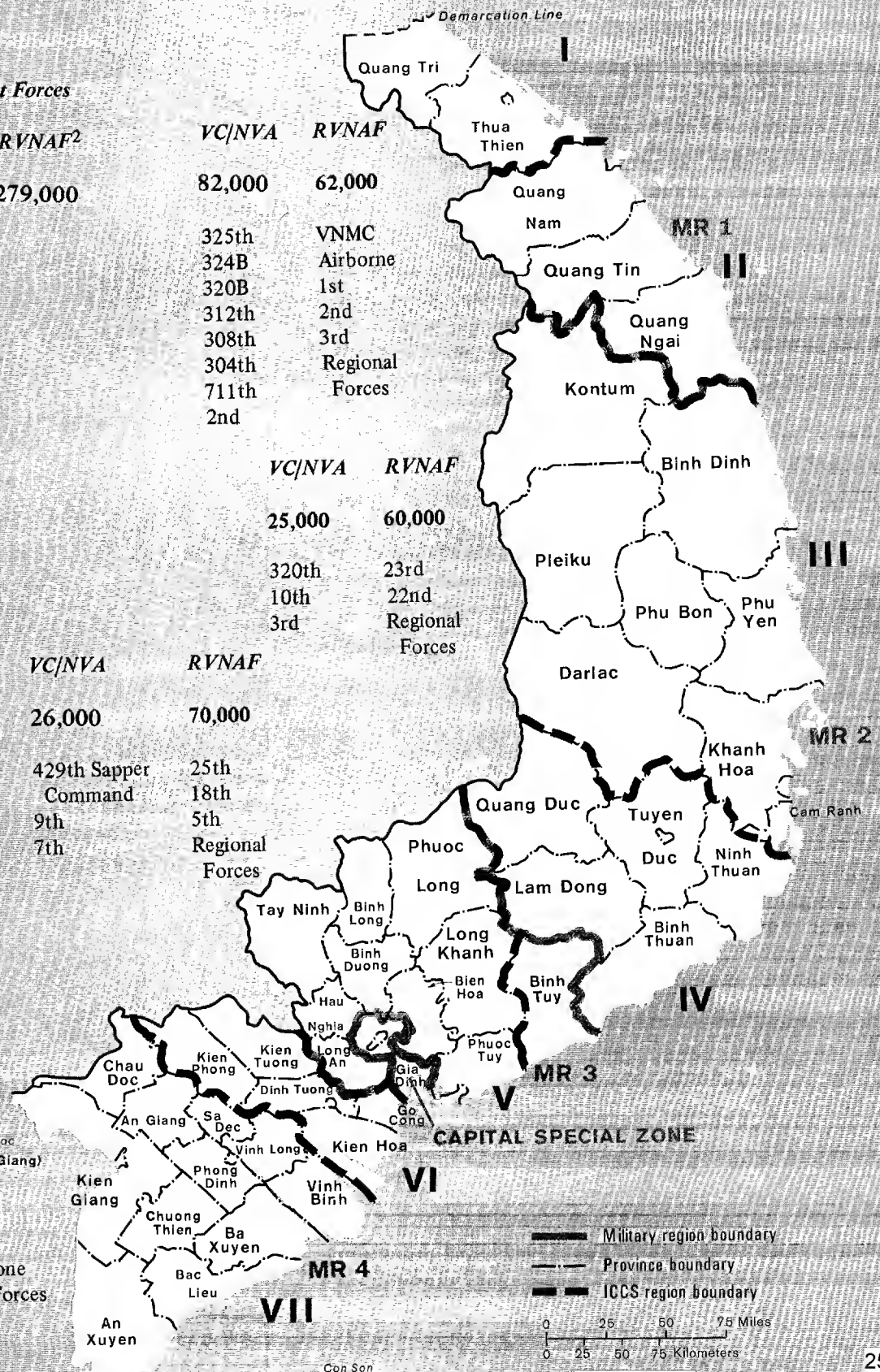
26,000    70,000

429th Sapper    25th  
Command    18th  
9th    5th  
7th    Regional  
Forces

VC/NVA    RVNAF

27,000    87,000

6th    21st  
5th    9th  
1st    7th  
44th Special  
Tactical Zone  
Regional Forces



1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in combat and combat support units and local force companies and platoons.
2. Includes RVNAF personnel in combat, combat support, and regional force units.

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28. In another significant air defense development, recent COMINT indicates that major elements of the 593rd AAA Regiment are deploying from the northern part of the Laotian Panhandle to South Vietnam's Central Highlands. Apparently included in the deployment are two battalions and the regimental headquarters. Advance elements of these units arrived in the tri-border area as early as mid-February, while the rest of the column is still moving through the Laotian Panhandle and should arrive by the end of the month. The deployment will not seriously degrade NVA air defense capabilities in the Panhandle, because the North Vietnamese deployed three additional AAA regiments from North Vietnam to southern Laos in January.

29. Tenuous evidence suggests that Hanoi may have deployed SA-2 missiles (SAMs) to the Communist-designated COSVN area this dry season for the first time of the war. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] two heavily guarded trucks with covered cargoes on 27 February just southeast of Mimot, which [REDACTED] were SAMs brought down through Laos for emplacement near Mimot, Cambodia, or Loc Ninh, South Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] If confirmed, the presence of SAMs would significantly increase the air defense protection afforded the Mimot/Snoul area - designated a post-cease-fire Communist base and staging area for its forces in GVN MR 3.

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30. In MR 3, additional elements of the South Vietnam Liberation Army were detected in Tay Ninh Province. By 5 March the Military Intelligence Bureau moved into South Vietnam from Kratie Province, Cambodia. This redeployment, made since 5 January, is one more of a series of relocations of major command elements from Cambodia to South Vietnam over the last three months. In this connection a major COSVN command element moved almost 45 miles from central Kratie Province to a position close to the Cambodia-South Vietnam border between 30 January and 7 March. A further move into Tay Ninh Province of South Vietnam may be expected.

#### *Developments in Laos*

31. In northern Laos during the past week there were indications that the 174th Regiment of the 316th NVA Division - located on the southwestern rim of the Plaine des Jarres - is preparing for a standdown in military operations. On 8 March, subordinate units of the 174th Regiment were directed to improve and cover their bunkers as "the rainy season has come." Moreover, the intercept indicated that the deployment of the 174th will remain "unchanged" for the near future. In conjunction with the standdown, one battalion was ordered to send some men to the regiment for training to be conducted soon. Farther east, elements of the

335th NVA Independent Regiment apparently are making preparations to end operations southeast of the Plaine des Jarres. COMINT on 4 and 9 March revealed that the regiment has instructed its battalions to settle their economic, political, and personal affairs as well as to take a weapons inventory. Moreover, one support unit was instructed to check equipment and weapons so that "all units" could be at the regimental headquarters on 5 March to receive a new, unspecified mission.



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